

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
POLLUTION/SITUATION REPORT  
West Fertilizer Inc. - Removal Polrep



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
Region VI

**Subject:** POLREP #9  
Progress  
West Fertilizer Inc.  
  
West, TX  
Latitude: 31.8165640 Longitude: -97.0877630

**To:** Ragan Broyles, US EPA  
kelly cook, tceq

**From:** Mark Hayes, Federal On-Scene Coordinator

**Date:** 4/25/2013

**Reporting Period:**

**1. Introduction**

**1.1 Background**

<b>Site Number:</b>	<b>Contract Number:</b>
<b>D.O. Number:</b>	<b>Action Memo Date:</b>
<b>Response Authority:</b> CERCLA	<b>Response Type:</b> Emergency
<b>Response Lead:</b>	<b>Incident Category:</b>
<b>NPL Status:</b> Non NPL	<b>Operable Unit:</b>
<b>Mobilization Date:</b> 4/17/2013	<b>Start Date:</b> 4/17/2013
<b>Demob Date:</b>	<b>Completion Date:</b>
<b>CERCLIS ID:</b>	<b>RCRIS ID:</b>
<b>ERNS No.:</b>	<b>State Notification:</b>
<b>FPN#:</b>	<b>Reimbursable Account #:</b>

**1.1.1 Incident Category**

Emergency Response

**1.1.2 Site Description**

Fire and explosion at a fertilizer formulation facility

**1.1.2.1 Location**

West, McLennan County, Texas

### **1.1.2.2 Description of Threat**

The release of agricultural chemicals into the environment, which may impact human health.

### **1.1.3 Preliminary Removal Assessment/Removal Site Inspection Results**

The facility was destroyed in the fire and explosion, with the exception of four "bullet" tanks and a hopper car filled with ammonium nitrate. The ammonium nitrate gondola car was blown off the rail siding, damaged, and released powdered fertilizer onto the ground.

## **2. Current Activities**

### **2.1 Operations Section**

#### **2.1.1 Narrative**

On April 17, 2013 a fire and explosion occurred at the West Fertilizer Company located in West, Texas. Local, state, and federal law enforcement and response personnel have responded to the incident. The U.S. EPA has mobilized personnel to the incident to conduct air monitoring activities upon request from Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).

The impact of the explosion has impacted an approximate ½ mile radius which includes residential homes, a nursing home, an apartment community and several schools.

#### **2.1.2 Response Actions to Date**

At 0000 hours on April 18, 2013 the EPA Airborne Spectral Photometric Collection Technology (ASPECT) aircraft conducted an overflight of the facility and surrounding area. Ammonia levels during the overflight were detected between 6 to 10 parts per million (ppm) at 650 feet downwind or southeast of the site and consistent with wind direction.

At 1208 hours on April 18, 2013, the EPA ASPECT conducted a second overflight of the facility and surrounding area. Ammonia levels during the overflight were detected southeast of the site and consistent with wind direction. The detections were at 6 ppm and 3 ppm.

Between 0430 to 0530 on April 18, 2013 the 6<sup>th</sup> Civil Support Team (CST) and Waco Fire Department HAZMAT conducted a Level B entry to deploy air monitoring instrumentation near the incident location. On April 18, 2013, TCEQ contractors performed an entry to assess a leaking anhydrous ammonia tank on-site. According to TCEQ representatives, the release was secured by closing a valve on one of the bullet tanks.

At 1155 hours on April 19, 2013, the EPA ASPECT conducted a third overflight of the explosion site and potentially affected areas to acquire aerial photography of the explosion site.

As of 1900 hours on April 19, 2013, EPA continues to perform air monitoring in residential areas around the site, including areas where search and rescue operations are on-going and areas affected by the evacuation order. Specific chemicals monitored included volatile organic compounds, ammonia, carbon monoxide, and lower explosive limit of methane gas. No significant levels were detected. EPA performed air monitoring within the facility boundaries during an ATF-led assessment of the incident. Air monitoring criteria included volatile organic compounds, ammonia, carbon monoxide, and lower explosive limit of methane gas. Monitoring instruments did not detect any of the listed parameters.

As of 2000 hours on April 20, 2013, EPA continues to perform mobile and stationary air monitoring in residential areas surrounding the site. Mobile air monitoring was conducted in residential areas, including areas planned to be re-opened to the public in the next few days. One stationary monitor was deployed at the high school southeast of the site, and was later moved to the apartment complex east of the site due to a change in wind direction. No significant levels of contaminants were detected. Search and rescue activities were complete on 4/19/2013. EPA prepared a Quality Assurance Sampling Plan for soil

sampling in the area immediately surrounding the site to assess the concentrations of potential site related contaminants and coordinated with local officials, TCEQ, and ATF on sampling mission.

At 2040, TCEQ and Union Pacific railroad personnel began offloading the remaining anhydrous ammonia product from on-site tanks. The offloading of the anhydrous ammonia was completed successfully at approximately 2130 hours and transported as product off-site to Waco, Texas. EPA conducted stationary air monitoring downwind of the transfer operations and is coordinated with TCEQ, Union Pacific, Texas DEM, and the various law enforcement agencies.

On April 21, 2013, EPA collected soil samples from properties in the immediate vicinity of the site that are owned by the City of West and the West Independent School District. Samples were collected to evaluate the potential off-site presence of site related contaminants. A total of 12 composite soil samples were collected to be analyzed for pesticides. EPA continued mobile and stationary air monitoring. Mobile air monitoring was conducted in the residential neighborhoods near the site. No concentrations of air contaminants were detected above site action levels.

On April 22, 2013, EPA continued air monitoring activities with two stationary sites proximal to the facility and one mobile monitoring team that monitored in the neighborhoods west of the facility. Twenty-four hour air monitoring activities have been reduced to daylight operations only. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) met with all federal agencies today en route to coordinate with State of Texas officials in Austin, TX.

On April 23, 2013 EPA continued air monitoring activities with two stationary sites proximal to the facility and one mobile monitoring team that monitored in the neighborhoods west of the facility. The EPA Region 6 Regional Administrator and the Chairman of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality toured the fertilizer facility to assess current site conditions.

On April 24, 2013 EPA continued daytime air monitoring activities with two stationary sites proximal to the facility. EPA and TCEQ personnel met to discuss air monitoring reporting and debris management.

On April 24, 2013 EPA and TCEQ conducted an offsite assessment of an impacted area caused by storm water runoff from the West Fertilizer facility. TCEQ stated that the runoff occurred during a rainfall event following the incident. TCEQ is currently developing a sampling plan to assess and determine the extent of contamination.

On April 25, 2013 EPA continued daytime air monitoring activities with three stationary sites to the west and south of the facility. During the morning operational briefing of state and federal agencies, it was indicated that a system to allow evacuated residents to re-enter has been developed and displaced residents may be allowed to evaluate their homes as early as Saturday, April 27, 2013. EPA and TCEQ continue to coordinate air monitoring plans for the public in the vicinity of the damaged and evacuated homes during the re-entry process. FEMA has requested a meeting to discuss debris management with EPA and TCEQ tentatively scheduled for April 26, 2013. OSC Eric Delgado attended the West Firefighter Memorial Service at Baylor University with fellow response agency personnel working at the site.

FEMA is coordinating a debris task force for debris removal. FEMA is coordinating debris removal planning and operations with the City of West, McLennan County, United States Army Core of Engineers (USACE), and TCEQ.

EPA continues to coordinate with FEMA, ATF, OSHA, CSB, TCEQ, and the Office of the Texas State Chemist on current and future site operations.

TCEQ contractors continued conducting air monitoring around the facility perimeter.

An official statement of the cause of the incident has not been released. Investigations into the order of events and cause of the explosion are on-going.

### **2.1.3 Enforcement Activities, Identity of Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs)**

#### 2.1.4 Progress Metrics

<i>Waste Stream</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Manifest #</i>	<i>Treatment</i>	<i>Disposal</i>

### 2.2 Planning Section

#### 2.2.1 Anticipated Activities

EPA will continue to conduct air monitoring operations throughout neighborhoods near the incident location.

TCEQ will continue 24 hour air monitoring operations around the perimeter of the West Fertilizer facility

##### 2.2.1.1 Planned Response Activities

Air monitoring activities by both TCEQ and EPA will continue.

##### 2.2.1.2 Next Steps

#### 2.2.2 Issues

### 2.3 Logistics Section

No information available at this time.

### 2.4 Finance Section

No information available at this time.

### 2.5 Other Command Staff

No information available at this time.

## 3. Participating Entities

No information available at this time.

## 4. Personnel On Site

No information available at this time.

## 5. Definition of Terms

No information available at this time.

## 6. Additional sources of information

No information available at this time.

## **7. Situational Reference Materials**

No information available at this time.